



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1350.0 - Australian Economic Indicators, 1991

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 21/08/1991

1991 Feature Article - The Census of Population and Housing

This article was published in Australian Economic Indicators July 1991 issue on 1 July 1991.

Introduction

Australia's twelfth national census of population and housing will be held on 6 August 1991. In fact, census forms are being delivered to some 6.5 million households across Australia at the time this article is released. This is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The census includes all persons in Australia on census night, with some exceptions. Foreign diplomats and their families are excluded as are foreign crew members on ships. Visitors to Australia are counted regardless of how long they have been in the country or how long they plan to stay. Australian residents out of the country on census night are generally not included unless they have left the country without being required to undertake departure formalities (eg military personnel on active service).

Two of Australia's external territories, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island will also be included in the 1991 Census. However, as in the 1986 Census, the counts of these external territories will not be included in the total Australian counts.

The objective of the census is to measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on census night. This provides a reliable basis for the estimation of the population of each of the States, Territories and local government areas primarily for electoral purposes and the distribution of government funds. The census also provides the characteristics of the population and its housing within small areas and for small population groups to support planning, administration and policy development by governments, businesses and other users.

Population estimates

Population estimates based on the census are used to determine the number of seats allocated to each State in the House of Representatives. Population estimates are also used in the allocation of Commonwealth grants to the State, Territory and local governments. In 1990-91 these amounted to \$14 billion.

They are also used as benchmarks to improve the accuracy of statistics obtained from the ABS's wide range of sample surveys from households, such as the Monthly Labour Force Survey, the National Health Survey and the Income Survey.

Estimates of the resident population at census date are obtained by:

- (i) taking usual residence census counts (where persons are counted according to the State or Territory where they usually reside and persons who usually reside overseas are excluded);
- (ii) adjusting the usual residence counts for census underenumeration based on the results of a

post-enumeration survey and independent demographic estimates of the population;

(iii) adding to the adjusted usual residence counts estimates of the number of Australians temporarily overseas at census date based on passenger card information from Australian residents returning to Australia in the 12 months following census date.

Estimates of resident population at the census date classified by gender are updated quarterly for Australia, the States and Territories using registered births and deaths, estimates of overseas and inter-state migration. This process is repeated each quarter until the following population census when the series is re-based on results of the new census. Estimates classified by age as well as gender at the National and State/Territory level and at the Statistical Local Area level are compiled each year, as at 30 June.

Long term population trends

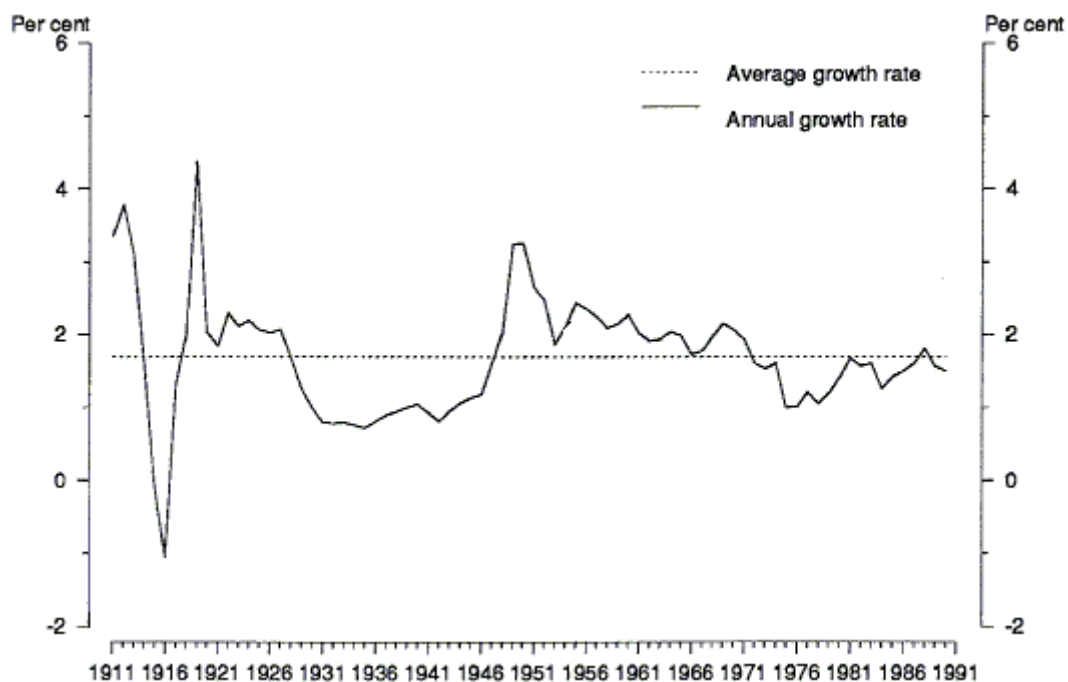
Between the first national census, conducted in 1911, and the census in 1986, the population of Australia increased from 4.5 million to 16.0 million. At 30 June 1990, it was estimated to be 17.1 million.

TABLE 1. CENSUS COUNTS AND GROWTH

Census Year	Census count (number)	Overseas born (per cent)	Average annual intercensal growth rate (per cent)		
			Australian born	Overseas born	Total
1911	4,455,005	17.2	na	na	na
1921	5,435,734	15.6	2.2	1.0	2.0
1933	6,629,839	13.6	1.9	0.5	1.7
1947	7,579,358	9.8	1.3	1.4	1.0
1954	8,986,530	14.3	1.7	8.1	2.5
1961	10,508,186	16.9	1.8	4.7	2.3
1966	11,550,462	18.4	1.5	3.7	1.9
1971	12,755,638	20.2	1.5	3.9	1.9
1976	13,548,448	20.1	1.3	1.1	1.2
1981	14,576,330	20.9	1.3	2.0	1.5
1986	15,602,156	21.1	1.2	1.6	1.4

In the course of the past 80 years, the annual rate of growth has fluctuated from below 1 per cent during the two World Wars and the Depression to over 3 per cent at the end of the 1940's when Australia began accepting large numbers of settlers from Europe. During the 1980's, the average annual growth rate was 1.5 per cent.

GRAPH 1. POPULATION GROWTH, AUSTRALIA



Throughout, growth has been due to two factors: natural increase, which is the difference between births and deaths and net overseas migration. Some notion of the relative impact of the two components on population size can be gained by examining the growth rates of the Australian-born and the overseas-born populations separately.

Geographic distribution

In 1986, most of Australia's people were still to be found in New South Wales (35 per cent) and Victoria (26 per cent) despite the steady decline in their shares of population over the past 25 years. The next most populous State, Queensland, had 17 per cent of the total population, an increase over the 15 per cent share it had in 1976. South Australia and Western Australia had about 9 per cent of the population each, although their growth patterns have been quite different. South Australia's share of population has been declining since 1966 while that of Western Australia has increased steadily. In 1986, Western Australia's population exceeded that of South Australia by 61,000; in all previous census counts, South Australia's population had been the larger. The remaining people were divided between Tasmania (3 per cent), the Australian Capital Territory (2 per cent) and the Northern Territory (1 per cent).

TABLE 2. STATE AND TERRITORY SHARES OF AUSTRALIAN CENSUS COUNTS

State/Territory	Census Year (per cent)			
	1954	1966	1976	1986
NSW	38.1	36.7	35.3	34.6
Vic	27.3	27.9	26.9	25.8
Qld	14.7	14.4	15.0	16.6
SA	8.9	9.5	9.2	8.6
WA	7.1	7.2	8.4	9.0
Tas	3.4	6.2	6.0	2.8
NT	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.0
ACT	0.3	0.8	1.5	1.6

Australia's people are highly urbanised and also concentrated in a small number of large cities,

situated mainly along the eastern and southern seaboard. In 1986, over 10 million people, or 64 per cent of Australia's population, lived in the six State and two Territory capital cities, compared to 9 million, or 65 per cent, in 1976. In Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, the State capital city had over 70 per cent of the State's population in both 1976 and 1986 and each had a population more than ten times greater than that of the next largest city in the State. In 1986, Sydney (3.5 million) had 22 per cent of the national population and Melbourne (2.9 million) had 18 per cent, in both cases a slight decline from 1976. These largest two cities, together with Adelaide and Hobart, grew at rates significantly lower than the national average.

TABLE 3. POPULATION OF CAPITAL CITIES 1976 AND 1986

Capital city (a)	Estimated resident population ('000)		10 year Per cent of State population growth (per cent)	Per cent of national population	
	1976	1986		1976	1986
Sydney	3,148.8	3,472.7	10.5	63.4	62.8
Melbourne	2,723.7	2,931.9	7.6	71.5	70.5
Brisbane	1,000.9	1,196.0	19.5	47.8	45.6
Adelaide	924.1	1,003.8	8.6	72.5	72.6
Perth	832.8	1,050.4	26.1	70.7	72.0
Hobart	164.4	179.0	8.9	39.9	40.1
Darwin	44.2	74.8	69.2	45.0	48.5
Canberra(b)	226.5	281.0	24.1	na	na
All capital cities	9,060.2	10,189.6	12.5	na	na

(a) Statistical Division or District. (b) Canberra Statistical District comprising Canberra and the adjacent New South Wales City of Queanbeyan.

Ageing of the population

The age structure of the population has been changing. People are living longer and women are having fewer babies. Between 1976 and 1986 the number of children (aged 0 to 14 years) declined from 3.7 million to 3.6 million, the first time that this has occurred. Among older people however, there have been marked increases with the number of people aged 65 to 84 years rising from 1.1 million to 1.5 million and the number aged 85 years or more rising from 82,000 to 127,000 in the same period. Comparing these changes to changes in the size of the population aged 15 to 64 years gives an indicator of the extent of the structural shift in age. The youth ratio has decreased since 1976 while the elderly and aged ratios have increased.

TABLE 4. SUMMARY MEASURES OF POPULATION: AGE AND SEX

	Census Year			
	1911	1954	1976	1986
DEPENDENCY RATIO (PER CENT OF POPULATION AGED 15-64 YEARS)				
Youth (0-14 years)	49.4	45.2	42.7	35.2
Elderly (65 years & over)	6.7	13.1	14.0	16.0
Aged (85 years & over)	0.2	0.6	1.0	1.2
Median age (years)	24.0	30.2	28.3	31.0

SEX RATIO (MALES PER 100 FEMALES)

Age group (years)				
0-14	102.7	104.5	105.0	105.1
15-64	110.5	104.5	102.5	102.0
65 & over	111.2	81.6	72.2	72.7
85 & over	96.2	64.3	41.7	37.0
Total	108.0	102.4	100.0	99.2

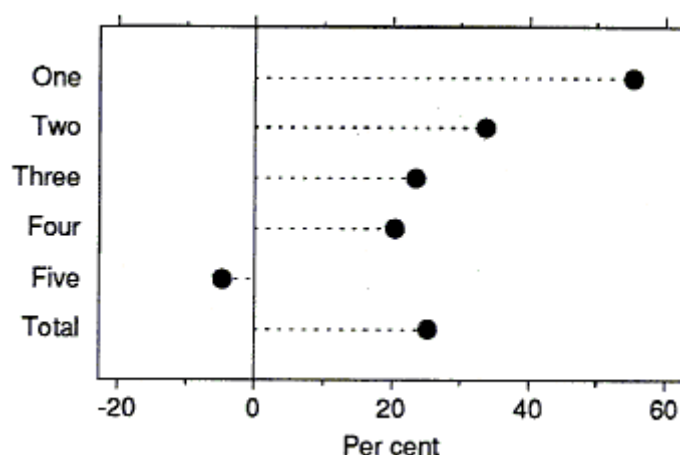
There has been an increase in the median age of the population since 1976, from 28.3 years to 31.0 years in 1986. In the period 1954 to 1976 however, when both overseas migration and the birth rate were particularly high, the median age of the population decreased.

Households and families

The number of households has been increasing at a faster rate than the number of people living in them. Between 1976 and 1986 the number of households increased by 25 per cent (from 4.1 million to 5.2 million) while the number of household members increased by 15 per cent (from 12.9 million to 14.9 million people). This resulted in average household size declining from 3.1 people in 1976 to 2.9 people in 1986.

The shift to smaller households can also be seen in the declining proportion of households with four or more people and the increase in the number of one and two person households. In 1976, 39 per cent of all households had four or more people, but by 1986 this proportion had declined to 33 per cent. The number of lone person households increased by 55 per cent and the number of two person households by 34 per cent in the ten year period.

GRAPH 2. HOUSEHOLDS: INCREASE IN NUMBER, CLASSIFIED BY SIZE, 1976-86



Non-family households increased by 18 per cent between 1981 and 1986. Although this rate was greater than that of families, there had been a slowing down in the rate of non-family household formation when compared with the 1976-81 period. This slowing down is likely to be due to the more stable and lower divorce rate in recent years after the initial impact of the Family Law Act.

A comparison of the number of families in 1986 with the number according to earlier censuses is possible only in terms of estimates of the major family types because of changes in the way families were counted in 1986. In the following comparisons, the 1986 family data have been

adjusted to achieve as much comparability as possible with earlier census data; however, it has not been possible to adjust for all the changes in definitions introduced in 1986.

TABLE 5. FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS, GROWTH BY TYPE

Family/household type	Number ('000)			Per cent change in number	
	1976	1981	1986(a)	1976-81	1981-86
Couple only	955.3	1,063.3	1,156.2	11.3	8.7
Couple, others (b)	2,031.2	2,095.4	2188.3	3.2	4.4
One parent, others (b)	221.5	317.2	356.0	43.2	12.2
Related adults (c)	200.9	223.4	273.2	11.2	22.3
All families	3,408.9	3,699.3	3,973.7	8.5	7.4
Non-family households (d)	842.4	1,113.1	1,313.8	32.1	18.0

(a) Adjusted for differences due to coding of family structure and identification of de facto couples without children and excluding families in caravan parks.

(b) 'Others' include dependent children and/or other adult family members.

(c) It is not possible to adjust the 1986 data for this category for differences in the definition of dependent children and adult family members.

(d) Non-family households were coded as 'head only' family type in previous censuses.

The number of families increased by 7.4 per cent during the years 1981 to 1986, slightly greater than the increase in population and less than the 8.5 per cent increase during the preceding 5-year period. Families consisting of a couple with children or other family members showed the smallest increase although they were still greater in number than the other family types. The rate of growth in other family types during 1981-86 was slower than during 1976-81.

Labour force participation

While the overall rate of labour force participation of persons aged 15 and over changed by only 1.4 percentage points between the 1976 and 1986 Censuses, there were considerable changes in the composition of the labour force. In 1976, 44 per cent of women aged 15 years and over and 79 per cent of men aged 15 years and over were in the labour force. In 1986, equivalent figures were 48 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men. The decline in labour force participation of men occurred in all age groups except 20 to 24 years while the growth in womens' participation occurred at all ages except 55 years and over.

The increase in labour force participation of women was particularly large among married women aged 25 to 54 years, the ages traditionally associated with raising a family.

TABLE 6. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES(a)

	Age group					
	15-19	20-24	25-54	55-64	65 & over	Total
Men						
1976	56.0	89.4	95.1	78.2	16.8	79.3
1986	54.3	90.2	93.5	63.5	9.3	75.1

Women							
married	1976	49.4	55.5	50.0	25.7	6.5	43.8
	1986	50.7	63.0	58.5	23.2	4.6	47.5
other	1976	50.4	77.1	64.8	29.7	4.4	43.9
	1986	52.0	81.4	68.0	23.2	2.2	48.3
total	1976	50.3	65.0	52.5	27.0	5.1	43.8
	1986	52.0	75.4	60.9	23.2	3.1	47.8
Persons							
	1976	53.2	77.3	74.2	52.0	10.0	61.4
	1986	51.9	81.0	75.6	42.4	5.7	60.0

(a) People in the labour force in each category as a percentage of all people in each category.

There was a decline in labour force participation of both men and women in the 55 to 64 years age group. Among men in that age group the decline was quite marked, from 78 per cent in 1976 to 63 per cent in 1986. Among women, who had considerably lower rates of participation to start with, the decline was much smaller, from 27 per cent to 23 per cent.

Data for small areas and small groups of the population

While the preceding paragraphs give some idea of the ways in which census data throw light on the composition and characteristics of the population in a national sense, there is another side to the census. It also provides the characteristics of the population and its housing within small areas and for small population groups. Data of this kind are critical to many planning, administration and policy development activities of governments, businesses and other users.

Although some of this information is available from other sources, only a census can provide it for small geographic areas and small population groups.

The consultation process: 1991 Census

Planning for the 1991 Census began before the 1986 Census was conducted and early in 1988, the ABS sought public comment on its preliminary views about the content of the 1991 Census.

More than 560 submissions were received and these were followed up by consultation with major users and other parties. After this process, the final recommendations were drafted, which, following discussion with the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, led to the Government announcing a decision on the content of the 1991 census in May 1989.

Planning the products and services to be released from the 1991 Census also began three years ago. Product development has evolved as a result of experience gained in the release of the 1986 Census output, due to changes in the types of products and services required by users and the way in which they want statistics presented.

As part of a strategy to provide client orientated output, the ABS has, for the past two years, been involved in a national census user consultation program, including:

- A national survey on the usefulness of the 1986 Census small area data;
- Workshops and meetings with key user groups having a particular field of interest, to design the census tables that will meet their needs;
- A national survey commissioned to determine user perceptions of CDATE86, the electronic data base of 1986 Census small area data on a compact disk; and
- A series of census user seminars in capital cities to which ABS invited representatives of all known and many potential user groups.

This activity has resulted in many modifications to the content of proposed products. Typical requests from users are:

- Can the layout or content of a table(s) be amended?
- Is it possible to incorporate a new table to my specifications?
- Can I have this product on a specific medium (floppy disk, for example)?
- When will these products be released?
- How much will they cost?

To date approximately one thousand census users have had their say in the design of 1991 Census products and services. Current plans for 1991 Census products and services are described below.

1991 Census products and services

Census products will be available in the form of printed publications, microfiche, magnetic tape, floppy disk and compact disk.

Printed publications will continue to be used to disseminate both the broad results and many of the detailed statistics from the Census. Statistical publications planned include the following:

- first counts for SLAs (a series containing preliminary data for each State/Territory);
- national first counts (national preliminary data);
- a series containing final counts for each State/Territory;
- census characteristics for each State/Territory and Australia (a series of detailed cross-classified statistics);
- Australia in Profile (a portrait of contemporary Australian society as painted by the census) and other thematic publications; and
- social atlases.

A number of reference publications will enable clients to understand what the census data and various geographical codes mean. These include "The 1991 Census Dictionary (cat. no. 2901.0)" and "The Directory of 1991 Classifications (cat. no. 2904.0)".

For the 1991 Census, **customised matrixes** (cross-classified tables) will be available much earlier than for the 1986 Census. Clients have the opportunity to specify the tables they want before the census is conducted. In this way the ABS will be in a position to produce the matrixes soon after final data become available. Orders are being taken now.

Geographical comparisons at State, capital city or regional level will also be produced. At the State level these consist of counts for every class of all the data items for each State. For smaller areas, some collapsing of classifications may be necessary to protect confidential information.

A group of products known as **community profiles** will be available for the 1991 Census. These

products replace the various sets of tables released from previous censuses which were known as small area summary data. The statistics will continue to be simple tables showing two or more key census variables but the tables have been extensively revised.

As well as standard community profiles, clients are able to specify their own combination of census geographic areas and particular tables from the profile data base to obtain a community profile customised to their needs.

The profiles are to be available on most output media, according to the preference of the client and may be printed on demand at all ABS Information Services locations. Standard community profiles will also be available, free of charge, to major public libraries.

A most successful product from the 1986 Census was CDATA86 - a small area profile database on compact disk which was accessible via a CD-ROM reader by micro computer. The disk also contained data manipulation and statistical mapping software. For the first time the ABS was able to put a comprehensive profile database directly in the hands of users in a form that could be accessed using relatively simple technology.

The ABS aims to build on this success with the production of **CDATA91**. CDATA91 is likely to contain data from the 1986 and 1991 Censuses with improved interface, software and documentation. It will include significantly enhanced mapping facilities. Training will be provided at different levels to complement the varying levels of expertise existing among users.

Collection district maps will continue to be available in hard copy and microfiche form.

CMA91, a new product proposed for the 1991 Census, will contain the complete set of census collection district maps on CD-ROM, at both the national and State/Territory level.

Digitised boundary files will also be available for all standard geographic areas.

Further information and consultation

Many of the proposed products have yet to be finalised and further user consultation will be undertaken.

Census Update (cat. no. 2902.0) is a quarterly newsletter designed to keep clients informed of developments in products and services and advised of customised tables available for resale. The first issue will be released in September this year.

There is an early bird offer to provide potential users with an opportunity to obtain customised matrixes as soon as the census data are available.

If you wish to discuss this offer or to place orders for customised matrices, contact Maree Curran on 02 - 6252 5934.

This page last updated 18 December 2009

© Commonwealth of Australia

All data and other material produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) constitutes Commonwealth copyright administered by the ABS. The ABS reserves the right to set out the terms and conditions for the use of such material. Unless otherwise noted, all material on this website – except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark – is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence